

REMARKS

There remains pending in this application claims 1-3 and 5-7, of which claim 1 is independent. No claims have been cancelled or added.

In view of the above amendments and the following remarks, favorable reconsideration together with entry of those amendments and allowance of the above application is respectfully sought.

The invention as now set forth in independent claim 1 is directed to an image heating apparatus which comprises a conveying roller for conveying a recording material, heat supply means in contact with an external periphery of the conveying roller to supply heat thereto, backup means which forms a conveying nip portion in cooperation with the conveying roller. The invention is characterized in that in a rotating direction of the conveying roller, the heating nip portion has a width larger than a width of the conveying nip portion and a total pressure applied to the conveying nip portion is larger than a total pressure applied to the heating nip portion. The invention is further characterized in that the heat supply means includes a heat generating member, a holder for supporting the heat generating member, and a flexible rotary member nipped between a conveying roller and the heat generating member and rotating around the holder. The heating nip portion includes a first heating nip portion which is formed between the heat generating member and the conveying roller and a second heating nip portion which is formed between the holder and the conveying roller, a position of the first heating nip portion and a position of the second heating nip portion being different from each other in a direction through which the conveying roller moves.

Independent claim 1 was rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 102(e) as being anticipated Aizawa et al. (U.S. Publication No. 2003/0118363). In view of the above amendments and the reasons which follow, the rejection is respectfully traversed.

The present invention as set forth in independent claim 1 is characterized by a heating nip portion including a first heating nip portion which is formed between the heat generating member and the conveying roller and a second heating nip portion which is formed between the holder and the conveying roller, a position of the first heating nip portion and a position of the second heating nip portion being different from each other in a direction through which the conveying roller moves. As a result of this combination of features, it is possible to provide an image forming apparatus to reduce a start-up time to achieve a temperature rise capable of heating an image enough so as to ensure satisfactory fixing properties.

Aizawa et al. relates to an image heating apparatus which includes a rotatable member, backup means for cooperating with the rotatable member and heating means for heating an outer peripheral surface of the rotatable member, with the heating means including a heater in the form of a plate cooperable with the rotatable member to form a heating nip. Thus, Aizawa et al. does disclose a heating nip portion. However, Aizawa et al. fails to teach or suggest a second heating nip portion which is formed between the holder and the conveying roller, a position of the first heating nip portion and a position of the second heating nip portion being different from each other in a direction to which the conveying roller moves. For at least that reason, Applicants respectfully submit that Aizawa et al. does not teach or suggest the invention as recited in claim 1.

Claims 2, 3, and 5-7 each depend from claim 1 and are therefore patentable over the art of record for reasons noted above with respect to claim 1. In addition, each recite features of the invention still further distinguishing it from the applied art. Favorable and independent consideration thereof is respectfully sought.

Applicants respectfully request entry of the above amendments as they are being presented in an earnest effort to advance prosecution and place the application in condition for allowance. Such amendments were not earlier presented as Applicants were of the firm belief that the claims previously on file were in condition for allowance. Favorable consideration together with entry of the above amendments is respectfully sought.

Applicants respectfully submit that all outstanding matters in the above application have been addressed and that this application is in condition for allowance. Favorable reconsideration and early passage to issue of the above application are respectfully sought.

Applicants' undersigned attorney may be reached in our Washington, D.C. office by telephone at (202) 530-1010. All correspondence should continue to be directed to our below listed address.

Respectfully submitted,



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